

2 states legalize same sex marriage

WASHINGTON (BP) — Same sex marriage became legal in the states of Minnesota and Rhode Island after both legislatures approved the unions, extending same sex marriage to 13 states and the District of Columbia.

"This is a sad day in Minnesota and Rhode Island as politicians have allowed a mockery to be made of the institution of marriage, which throughout our history has been our only social institution to bring men and women together for the benefit of any children born of their union," said Brian Brown, president of the National Organization for Marriage (NOM) in Washington, D.C., in a written statement Aug. 1.

Today Minnesota and Rhode Island embark on a new path that jettisons the interests of children from their state marriage law, and puts people of faith in harm's way for being punished for their beliefs. We will work tirelessly to hold the politicians accountable for this travesty," Brown said.

Same sex couples in Minnesota married as early as 12:01 a.m. on Aug. 1 in locations including the Minneapolis City Hall, St. Paul's Como Park, the Mall of America's Chapel of Love, and at many county court-houses, The Washington Post reported.

Officials in the state estimated 5,000 same sex couples would marry there in the first year.

Ceremonies in Rhode Island were performed as early as 8:30 a.m. on Aug. 1, when municipal offices opened, the Christian Science Monitor reported, citing speculation that many homosexuals and lesbians there had already married in neighboring states where the practice was legalized.

Brown predicted the changes in law will lead to

see MARRIAGE on p. 10

Far from freedom of religion



IDENTITY PROTECTED — Sri Lankan Pastor Saman Perera (not his real name) appears in silhouette as he recounts in an interview the recent violent closing of his church by a mob of Buddhist extremists. Persecution of Christians has increased in the country in recent months. (BP photo)

Christian persecution on rise in Sri Lanka

SRI LANKA (BP) — It was just a normal Sunday. Around 75 people gathered in the house rented as their church building for worship. Praise music wafted out the door. Prayers lifted to heaven. Pastor Saman Perera (not his real name) stood behind the pulpit and asked the congregation to open their Bibles.

That's when "normal" came to a crashing end. Local Sri Lankan authorities stormed in from every exit, demanding the church service stop. Church members sat in shock until a bald man in saffron robes appeared.

With the entrance of the village's head Buddhist monk, people hid in back rooms, jumped out open windows, or knocked chairs over to get out the door only to meet up with an angry mob of nearly 1,000 yielding sticks and stones. "Leave or be killed," the mob chanted.

That was nearly four

see SRI LANKA on p. 9

Eritrean students arrested for 'commitment to Christ'

ASMARA, Eritrea (BP) — Eritrean authorities are punishing 39 high school students for their Christian faith, excluding them from a graduation ceremony and subjecting them to beatings and hard labor, according to Christian support organization Open Doors.

After completing a four-month military training required in Eritrea the students, including 11 girls, have been arrested for their "Christian beliefs and for their commitment to Christ," sources told Open Doors.

"The youths are now enduring beating, forced hard labor, and insufficient food and water" at the SAWA

"Sources said authorities are also threatening the students with long imprisonment and exclusion from university should they fail to renounce Christ."

**Open Doors
press statement**

military training center, the organization reported in a press statement. "Sources said

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

A 'choice' too far

Pity the poor children of California – at least the 6.2 million public school students in that mixed-up state. Radical leftist Governor Jerry Brown on Monday of this week signed into law a bill passed by the radical leftist California legislature that allows first graders to use the bathrooms, locker rooms, and showers of the gender they “choose,” and mandates that school administrators accommodate them.

You read right, even though you probably can't believe you just read it. School children in California, beginning in the first grade and continuing through their high school years, can now declare their gender regardless of physiological reality and avail themselves of that gender's facilities at any public school in the state.

That literally means a six-year-old child, while seeking to relieve himself/herself in a California public school, can encounter a much-older student (or adult?) of the opposite sex alone in an unmonitored rest room. The same is true when the six-year-old child is changing clothes in a school locker room or showering after gym class.

In California today, the child has no right to privacy or even a reasonable expectation that he/she will be able to practice modesty with regard to his/her most personal moments. However, anyone of the opposite gender can claim their “right” to be in the same room with the child by simply declaring themselves male or female.

“It's time to ensure that transgender people, and anyone who might be more masculine or feminine than our outdated notions of gender would allow, can use the restroom just like anyone else,” wrote Masen Davis, executive director of the Transgender Law Center in Oakland, Ca., in a June 24 item on huffingtonpost.com.

After Brown signed the school legislation earlier this week, Davis said in a press release, “Now, every transgender student in California will be able to get up in the morning knowing that

when they go to school as their authentic self they will have the same fair chance at success as their classmates.”

Apparently, the mere act of engaging in a common body function as one's perceived “authentic self” is now a guarantee of a “fair chance at success.” George Orwell is surely spinning in his British grave.

Such upside-down logic isn't isolated to California. Readers of this column will recall a recent commentary on the policy of Evergreen State College in Washington State that allows adult men to declare themselves female in order to gain access to locker rooms at the public university where young girls are changing into swimsuits or showering after going in the pool.

At least one adult male at the school often parades totally naked around the women's locker rooms under the pretense of being “transgender,” presumably in front of children and apparently with the school's endorsement. When an employee of the school confronted the man, the employee was ordered to apologize.

Think cases like this can't happen here in Mississippi, the proverbial buckle of the Bible Belt? Think again. The Mississippi Transgender Alliance opens its web site with this greeting: “Welcome to Mississippi Transgender Alliance! Be you Transsexual, Transvestite, Drag Queen or Cross Dresser, Male2Female or Female2Male we offer a place for understanding and support. No need to be alone any longer.” It's already here.

Do you know what that means? We don't have to travel across the country to be a witness to the transformational power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ on the lives of sinners, in a community of people who believe they are hopelessly destined to lead some sort of worldly lifestyle apart from what God has planned for them.

In other words, like we once were. Jesus transformed us. He can transform anyone. Let's get busy and get the job done (Matt. 28:18-20) – and let's get it done before the politicians get involved.

Sex trafficking comes to U.S.

News outlets across the nation recently reported the rescue of more than 100 teenage victims of sex trafficking. From a statement from Ronald Hosko, assistant director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) criminal investigative division, NBC reported that the sting resulted in the arrest of 159 pimps from San Francisco to Miami. The youngest victim was 13 years old.

For many people, this may be the first news of such atrocities occurring in these United States, the Land of the Free.

Sex trafficking is not only happening, the numbers are staggering. The FBI estimates that nearly 293,000 American youths currently are at risk of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Victims are often young, from broken families, or orphans. They are taken and sold for forced sex or prostitution. Most are girls, but boys are exploited as well.

Sex trafficking is a global issue. The FBI reports that it is the fastest-growing business of organized crime and the third-largest criminal enterprise in the world. Money and lust motivate men and women to abuse and exploit children in ways unimaginable, so much so that I have resisted linking to the plethora of graphic and disturbing images and articles describing the torture these children endure day in and day out. I've seen only a small portion of what this might look like.

As a young and naïve college student, I had no idea what I was about to stumble upon during my visit to Amsterdam. I knew that marijuana was legal and that I might encounter it. Oddly, I never did, but I did find myself in the middle of the Red Light District. The images I saw have haunted me since that trip. Women posing in windows for anyone to gawk at as voyeurs walked by. It is legal. It is blatant.

I now know it was a small taste of the devastating sex industry. What I saw was tame compared to the many sex trafficking reports of secret housing holding women hostage to be raped repeatedly.

As we learn about these tragedies the question that haunts us is, what can be done? How can the church help? The Psalmist wrote, “For he delivers



Guest opinion
with Trillia Newbell

the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life, and precious is their blood in his sight,” (Psalm 72:12-14).

Because of its criminal nature we are slightly limited in what we can do – but limitations aren't impossibilities and we know nothing is impossible for God. Here are three ways you might get involved.

Pray

Pray for the poor, needy, oppressed, and orphan. They are special to the Lord. Pray for government officials to continue to crack down on these crimes, and for the criminals.

Pray for families to be healed and children to be protected before a sex-trafficking criminal can reach them. Pray for the salvation of all those involved, that the Gospel would penetrate hearts and break the sinful bondage that entangles them and pour out forgiveness and grace.

Pray for healing for the girls and boys who have been rescued, that they would be able to return to society and live healthy, normal, productive lives.

This is not an exhaustive list, the prayer needs are many.

Be informed

You can't share what you don't know. This article is only an introduction. Various organizations have produced information to keep you informed and some are developing tools to help you remain active.

see NEWBELL on p. 10

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ERLC equips churches for 21st century challenges

WASHINGTON (BP) — For one church, it might be homosexuality. For another, it might be adoption. For another, it might be abortion or race relations or pornography or human trafficking.

Whatever issue a Southern Baptist church needs to address, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) is seeking to tailor congregation-by-congregation methods of helping them by means of a new initiative called Church Equip.

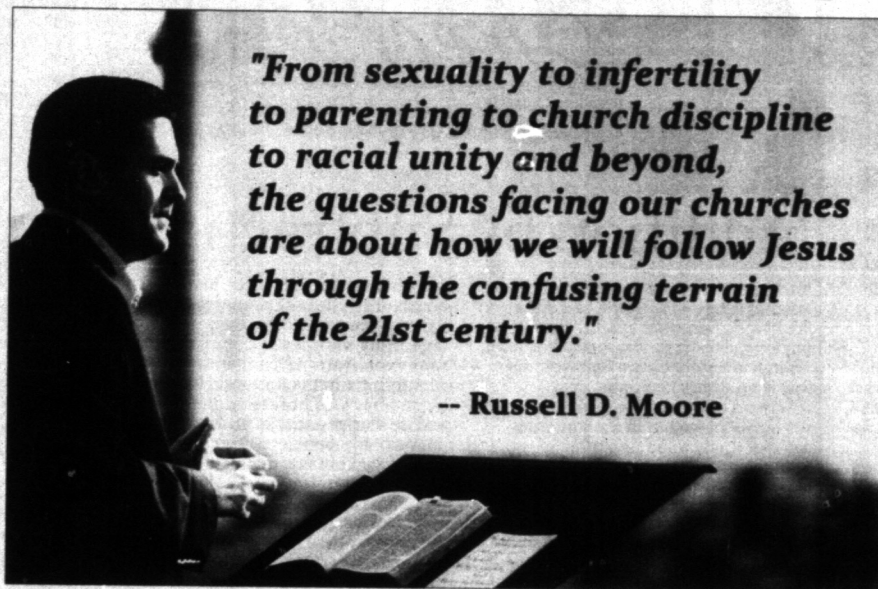
The topics could be anything from the arena of ethics, social/family issues, and religious freedom. Regardless of the subject, the ERLC is trying to "develop customized solutions for church equipping," said Phillip Bethancourt, the commission's director of strategic initiatives.

The question, he said, is: "What does that church need at any given time?"

The first two Church Equip events demonstrated that diversification. In mid-July, ERLC President Russell D. Moore taught leaders at Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas, on a Monday morning regarding sexual ethics, particularly homosexuality.

The following Sunday, he spoke at an adoption luncheon at Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., after preaching on the church's Orphan Sunday.

Assisting churches takes precedence, said Moore, whose administration at the ERLC began June 1. "The focus of the Kingdom of God in this age isn't primarily Washington or Wall Street. King Jesus is ruling in local congregations, colonies of His reign. That's why equipping congregations to think through ethical questions is the number one priority of the ERLC."



"From sexuality to infertility to parenting to church discipline to racial unity and beyond, the questions facing our churches are about how we will follow Jesus through the confusing terrain of the 21st century."

— Russell D. Moore

EQUIPPING CHURCHES — Biloxi native Russell D. Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, addresses attendees at a recent Church Equip conference at Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas. (BP image photo courtesy of tommyhuynh.com)

"From sexuality to infertility to parenting to church discipline to racial unity and beyond, the questions facing our churches are about how we will follow Jesus through the confusing terrain of the 21st century," Moore said.

Austin Stone Community Church desired equipping regarding homosexuality in particular for two reasons, said pastor Todd Engstrom:

■ "To continue thinking through how we can lovingly and truthfully pastor individuals who are attracted to the same sex;

■ "To think through our individual, corporate and civic response as a church community in light of" the Supreme Court's June decision striking

down the section of the Defense of Marriage Act that defined marriage as the union of a man and a woman for federal purposes.

Moore's training for a group of about 125 that consisted of elders and their wives, deacons, and staff members from six campuses was "a game changer," said Kevin Peck, Austin Stone's lead pastor.

"With all of the noise in today's media-rich world, Dr. Moore spoke biblical truth and wisdom with a distinct level of competency and concern," Peck said. "He offered a level of clarity, thoughtfulness, compassion and biblical precision that will enable my team to minister more effectively."

"We truly appreciate his

candid, Christ-centered and Gospel-saturated approach to issues such as homosexuality, transgender relationships, and other challenging issues in today's society."

Engstrom, Austin Stone's executive pastor of campuses and communities, said Moore's teaching "equipped our leadership to speak intelligently and lead pastorally. He tackles difficult topics like homosexuality with candor from a variety of angles — civically, pastorally, and personally — and provides a clear path forward for churches to contend for the Gospel in our generation."

For Johnson Ferry Church, Moore served as essentially a "cheerleader" in "kind of a pep

rally" for adoptive and foster families at the Sunday luncheon, said ministry associate Jim Watterson.

Moore and his wife Maria have adopted, and he has written *Adopted for Life*, a book about the importance of adoption to churches and Christian families.

The church invited to the luncheon people from inside and outside the congregation who had some connection to adoption or foster care. The invitees either had been adopted, had adopted children, were fostering children, or were preparing to be foster parents.

Moore encouraged the roughly 175 people at the luncheon "to keep going in their care for the fatherless, that it was not always easy but necessary and close to the heart of God," Watterson said.

"He also addressed the children gathered for lunch, expressing his confirmation to them of what their parents had done and would continue to do, to love and care for them, that they were no longer considered a family with adopted children but children adopted into a safe and forever family," Watterson recalled.

Earlier, Moore had preached in the church's morning worship services from Romans 8 on the adoption by God that Christians experience and the adoption of children in which Christians can participate.

The day's focus on orphan care resulted in 35 couples indicating they wanted to adopt and 30 to 35 committing to receive training to provide foster care, Watterson said.

Editor's Note: Pastors or churches interested in hosting a Church Equip event may contact Sam Dahl, executive assistant to the ERLC president, at sdahl@erlc.com.

POLITICS

Moore: participate in upcoming town hall meetings

WASHINGTON (BP) — The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) is encouraging Southern Baptists to participate in town hall meetings during the August recess of the U.S. Congress.

ERLC President Russell D. Moore said in an Aug. 5 e-mail alert to constituents that the town halls conducted by members of Congress in their districts provide "a great opportunity to personally reach out to your rep-

resentative to express your views on religious liberty, life, marriage, immigration, and more."

The e-mail alert provided links to spreadsheets with information of which ERLC is aware regarding dates, times, and locations of town hall meetings. The ERLC plans to send an email each week providing details on additional town halls.

Information on congressional town hall meetings in 20 states that are known so far can

On the web

Information on congressional town hall meetings in 20 states that are known so far can be viewed at the ERLC website, <http://erlc.com/article/erlc-2013-townhalls>.

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The two houses of Congress, the Senate and the House of Representatives, have failed to act in this session on legislation approved by the other regarding social or moral issues. For instance, the Senate passed an immigration reform bill in June. The House, meanwhile, has said it will not vote on the Senate-approved legislation but will chart its own course on the controversial issue.

Also in June, the House of Representatives voted to ban abortions on babies 20 weeks or more after fertilization. The Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act sets the prohibition at 20 weeks based on scientific evidence a child in the womb experiences pain by that point. The Senate has yet to act on the proposal.

Both houses of Congress are scheduled to reconvene on Sept. 9.

As a pastor I was always concerned when people left the church. It could have been any one of a thousand things including the family moving to another state or city, getting upset with someone or something like the temperature in the worship center, the kind of music that was being sung or not sung, the length of the sermon, a decision made in a business meeting, the removal of some shrubs or trees around the church, or the fact that a child did not get a part in the pageant that was going to be presented. However formidable or frivolous it might have been, it always concerned me.

It actually did not matter if the person or the family was supportive or contributed little or nothing. It could have been the most obstinate person that God ever created, but I hated to see them go. I always wondered what I could have done differently or not done, or how I could have solved the situation or appeased their feelings. But more often than not I was left without any answers though I may have had questions. Some way or other the pastor and the people have to come to an understanding that at times the only way real addition can take place is by subtraction.

Some years ago one of our churches here in the state had gone through a difficult time and a major controversy had erupted. Although there were thoughtful people on every side of the issue trying to bring peace and harmony, one person seemed to be the embodiment of hurt and bitterness. He was determined that at all costs he would see that everyone in the church hurt like he hurt. The folks in the church did everything that they could to try to reach out to



Addition by Subtraction

him, but they were unsuccessful. Friends, foes and people who agreed and disagreed with his position went to him. Finally, the man left the church. Eventually he joined a church in another town that was miles away from where he lived.

A friend of the man who left who was hurt by his leaving, told me sometime later that it was a sad, sad thing to come to the realization that sometimes there are people who in order to help the church the best thing that they can do is leave. I am often reminded of the story of the great victories that came to Gideon and the people of God because hundreds and, in fact, thousands who were not making any contribution to the battle were sent home. It was not Gideon's plan, but it was the Lord's. I have often wondered how Gideon felt when God told him to start sending those folks back home.

First, God told Gideon to tell them if

you do not want to be here, just go to the house. Then he put them to the test to see if they were going to be ready and willing to fight the enemy. Over 9,000 more were sent home. Gideon must have been wondering what in the world God was doing to him. God had decimated his army and now what could he possibly do. With 300 willing, courageous souls God told Gideon that He was ready to go to battle. I suppose great leaders always think that they can encourage, inspire and eventually everyone will get on board and be a part of the great work of God.

Yet the problem with Gideon was not that Gideon was not a great leader, inspirational and courageous. It was the people whose hearts did not want to follow the plan of God. That too is a tough call to make. You know that God is in something and no one else is able to grasp it except a handful. But even then God may be lead-

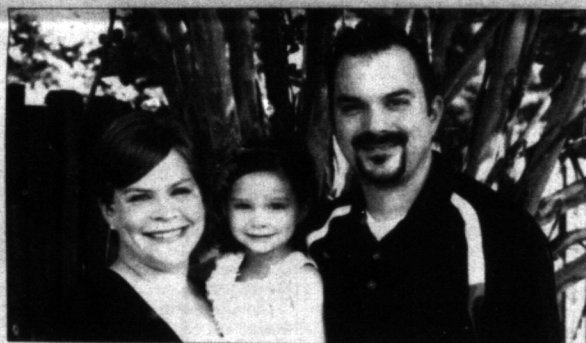
ing and the followers need to continue to follow. Recently, I heard a brief discussion on a sport's program talking about athletic teams that did so much better after one person was released. Invariably that person was talented, but was a troublemaker and always demanded that the spotlight be on him. He was always criticizing the other folks on the team, the coach and maybe the owner. Though the player may have felt he/she was indispensable, the team made vast improvements when the person left.

God's people are described as an army, a family and a body. But never is the believer described in an isolated fashion to be a lone ranger or super saint. In Gideon's small army the miracle and the mystery was two-fold when they faced overwhelming opposition and maybe feared defeat. One great piece of the victory is described in Judges this way. "And every man stood in his place." Are you filling your spot? Are you contributing to the ministry? Are you being a part of the great body of Christ to encourage all of the other parts of the body?

The other marvelous piece is the Lord Himself. God Almighty filling 300 with His power and grace is far more significant than 30,000 prima donnas who wanted to sit in the gallery and watch the battle take place. This is not a call for people to leave their church. It is a call for every one of us to get up, be harnessed up and face-up to the reality of what God wants to do in and through us. We need to get with the program and with the people of God.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Staff Changes



LIBERTY CHURCH, LIBERTY, has called Bradley Geno as pastor, beginning Sept. 8. Shown are Dawn Geno, Lydia Grace Geno, and Geno.

SKENE CHURCH, MID-DELTA ASSOCIATION, has called Keith Bolen as pastor. He and his wife, Lisa, come from Enon Church, Batesville.

In other Staff News:

➤ Ken McLemore has retired as pastor of First Church, Lake, and is available for pulpit supply. Contact him at (769) 202-5007, (601) 507-8780, or kenmclemore@bellsouth.net.

MS POSITIONS

BI-VACATIONAL YOUTH PASTOR - **CENTER BAPTIST CHURCH IN BLUE SPRINGS, MS.** Please mail resume to: Center Baptist Church, c/o Bro. Mike Brazeal, 1701 CR 121, Blue Springs, MS 38828.

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MINISTER OF MUSIC PART TIME POSITION BAPTIST CHURCH IN HERNANDO, MISSISSIPPI. Please mail resume to... Parkway Baptist Church, 50 N. Parkway, Hernando, MS 38632. Or email to parkway_baptist@comcast.net

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Just for the Record



Students from **SANDERSVILLE CHURCH, JONES COUNTY, FIRST CHURCH, SHARON, AND SARDIS CHURCH, WESSON**, participated in the Here and Now Beach Retreat at Romar Beach Baptist Church, Orange Beach, Ala.



FIRST CHURCH, RIPLEY, honored Tom Young, Associate Pastor/Minister of Music/Senior Adults for 15 years of service to the church and his retirement after 50 years in ministry. Young was honored July 21 with a church-wide supper and roast, love offering, a Weatherby .270 rifle with a Nikon scope and a new 2013 Yamaha golf cart. Shown are Young and pastor Rex Yancey.



OAK GROVE CHURCH, MENDENHALL, ordained Leroy Blair, Magee, as deacon. Shown are Blair and pastor Gayden Harrell.

In other Church News:

► Youth from **Center Hill Church, Hamilton** went on a mission trip to the Palmer Home for Children in Columbus.

► **Holly Church, Corinth**, is hosting a Bible conference with Allan Taylor Aug. 18 - 21; Sun., 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., noon (free lunch provided; reservations appreciated) and 6:30 p.m.; for information, call (662) 286-3474.

► **Salem Heights Church, Jones County**: Bible Conference, Aug. 18 - 20; Sun. 10:15 a.m., 6 p.m., and 7 p.m.; Mon. - Tues., noon and 6:30 p.m.; children's services each evening; Rick Coram, John Sullivan, Ted Traylor, and Robert Smith, speakers.

► **Escatawpa Church, Moss Point**, will host the Perrys in concert Aug. 23, 7 p.m. Doors open at 6 p.m. Tickets, \$12 in advance; \$15 at door. Call (228) 475-2938 or visit www.perrysministries.com.

► **North Long Beach Church, Long Beach**, will host His, a gospel singing group, Aug. 24, 6:30 p.m. Charles Bonner, pastor.

► **Okahola Church, Purvis**, is hosting the 6th Annual Reviving the Passion of Preaching Conference Nov. 7 - 9. Thurs., sessions begin at 1 p.m. with supper at 5 p.m.; Fri., 10 a.m. with lunch, and supper at 5:30 p.m.; and Sat., 10 a.m., followed by lunch and supper at 4 p.m. Speakers include Ergun Caner, Bailey Smith, Tommy Steele, Duane Moore, and Raymond Barber. Andrew Ishee, music; Josh Spiers, pastor. For more information, visit <http://revivingthepassionofpreaching.tripod.com> or call (601) 337-0236.

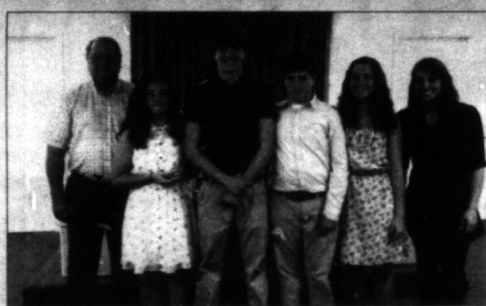
► **Campbell's Creek Church, Mendenhall**, will host a presentation by Mercy House Teen Challenge, a Christian faith-based solution to drug and alcohol dependency for adult men, Aug. 18, 10 a.m., followed by lunch. Love offering.



NEW HOPE CHURCH, FOXWORTH, has ordained Brett Guy as deacon. Shown are Guy and pastor Tim Parker.



LIBERTY CHURCH, KEMPER COUNTY, held a Celebration of Freedom featuring a musical led by music minister Doyle McKee. Shown are active duty and veteran armed forces members presenting flags: from left, Chris McKee, Zac Clay, Roy Watts, Caleb Clay, and Doug Wilkerson. Burt Cade, pastor.



The youth of **SINGLETON CHURCH, WINSTON ASSOCIATION**, led the congregation in worship July 7. Shown are leader Randal Livingston, Lydia Palmer, Brett Perkins, Michael Fuller, Whitney Palmer, and Samantha Perkins.



NEW HOPE CHURCH, FOXWORTH, recognized Beth Brumfield for 25 years of service as church secretary April 21. She has served with seven pastors. She is shown with pastor Tim Parker, presenting a plaque on behalf of the church.



BLACK JACK CHURCH, VAUGHAN, honored high school senior Shelby Veazey June 19.



BEAT LINE CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, ordained Alvis Apperson as deacon June 9. Shown are Apperson, his wife Vivian, and pastor Ben McDaniel.



LIBERTY CHURCH, LIBERTY, licensed minister of music David LeCompte to the ministry Aug. 4. Shown is deacon chairman Mike Tynes and LeCompte.

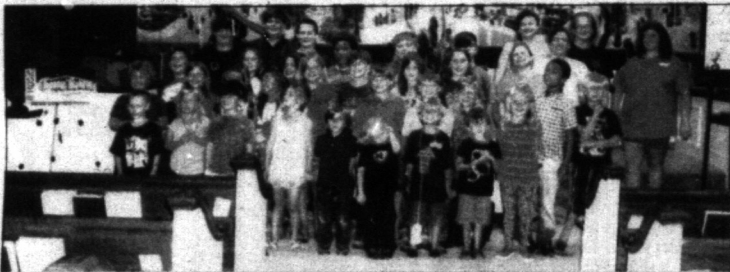
Vacation Bible School



MT. PISGAH, CARROLLTON: July 14 - 18; average attendance, 48 children and 24 adults; \$345.40 missions offering for the Baptist Children's Village; surprise visit by Smokey the Bear; Lanny Haley, pastor.



BETHANY CHURCH, POTTS CAMP: July 15-19; average attendance, 35; 16 prayers for salvation; mission offering to the Baptist Children's Village; Donald Worsham, pastor.



SKENE CHURCH, SKENE: four professions of faith.



FIRST CHURCH, NETTLETON: July 14 - 17.



GRACE UNITED CHURCH, DECATUR: July 17 -20; Jana Smith, youth and children's leader; Michelle Addy, music director.



CALVARY CHURCH, SUMMIT: July 15 - 19; enrollment, 72; average attendance, 62. Total participants, 130. Floyd Davis, pastor.



THE GROVE CHURCH, HATTIESBURG: Average attendance, 65.



PLEASANT HILL CHURCH, TIPPAAH COUNTY: shown are the participants.



NORTH MCCOMB CHURCH, MCCOMB: one person gave his life to Christ; Joanie Golman, children's and VBS director; Jess Greer, pastor.



FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, STARKVILLE: shown are students and leaders. Dickie Bryan, pastor.

Vacation Bible School



BRANDON CHURCH, BRANDON: shown is the assembly meeting at the beginning of each day.



ELLARD CHURCH, CALHOUN ASSOCIATION: shown are some of the participants.



CARSON CHURCH, CARSON: July 12 – 13; twenty-seven participants; one profession of faith.

In other VBS News:

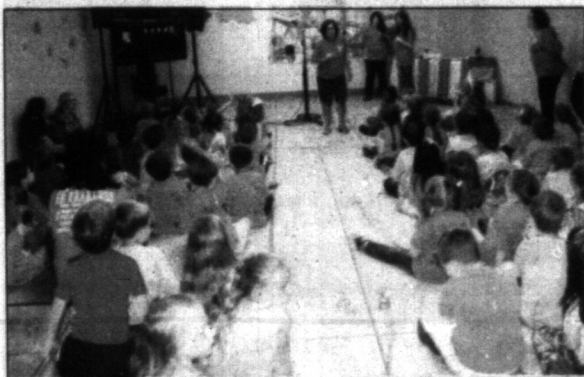
- **First Church, Eupora:** approximately 110 children registered.
- **Immanuel Church, Cleveland:** enrollment, 150; Steve Huber, pastor.



CORNERSVILLE CHURCH, CORNERSVILLE: July 27; 18 children enrolled; members of the church and community shared a BBQ meal afterwards. This was the church's first VBS in over 20 years.



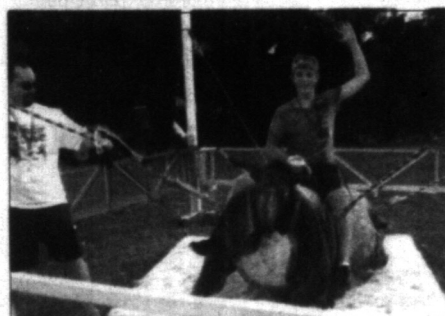
PARK PLACE CHURCH, BRANDON: shown are team leaders.



CROSSGATES CHURCH, BRANDON: shown are students learning about missions.



FIRST CHURCH, QUITMAN: offering, \$5701, which went toward purchasing 228 Bible Sticks to be sent to military personnel around the world.

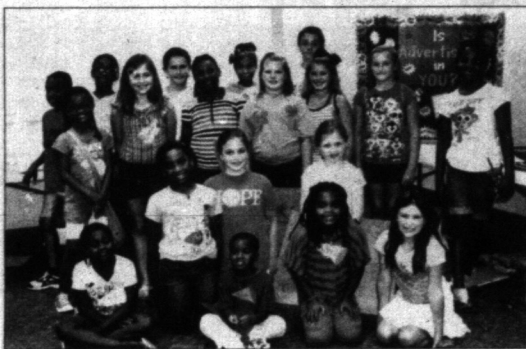


FIRST CHURCH, BRANDON: shown is a rodeo class at Sports Extreme Camp.



SLAYDEN CHURCH, MARSHALL ASSOCIATION: 142 students enrolled, 67 teachers and helpers; average attendance, 120; \$2162.16 offering sent to missionaries in SE Asia; nine salvations. Lisa Jones, director; Rusty Fair, pastor.

College News



Shown are some of the student participants posing in front of their project, "Is Advertising in You? - The Power and Design in Advertising" at the **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** 43rd Annual Creativity Workshop. The group included Carly Adkins, Samantha Adkins, Sarah Atterberry, Tyler Bracken, Hannah Buse, Blakely Byrd, Elijah Calhoun, Karrington Commodore, Paige Haskin, Makaylah Holcomb, Katherine Hyer, Rachel Johnson, Vanessa Jones, Mary Ashely Lindley, Tristen Lindley, Hannah O'Neil, Kelsey Parkman, Behanie Pheal, Jacob Roark, and Ora Williams.



Pictured is the new **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** College of Osteopathic Medicine (WCU-COM) class, Class of 2017. The class of 108 students is composed of 56 men and 52 women, ranging from ages 21-47.

In other College News:

► Approximately 500 students will receive degrees at **William Carey University** in one of four graduation ceremonies August 9 - 10. Tommy King, president of WCU, will preside at the ceremonies for undergraduate and graduate students of the New Orleans, Hattiesburg, and Tradition campuses. The ceremony for students on the New Orleans campus is August 9 at 5 p.m. in Leavell Chapel at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The speaker for the ceremony is Janet Williams, dean of the WCU School of Nursing. The ceremony for Hattiesburg students receiving graduate degrees is August 10 at 9:30 a.m. in Smith Auditorium. The speaker for the 9:30 ceremony is Judge Dawn Beam, 10th Dis-

trict Chancery Court Judge. The ceremony for Hattiesburg students receiving undergraduate degrees is August 10 at 1 p.m. in Smith Auditorium. The speaker is Barbara Childers McMillin, president of Blue Mountain College. The ceremony for Tradition campus students receiving both graduate and undergraduate degrees is August 10 at 4 p.m. in Smith Auditorium. LaRue Stephens, senior pastor at First Church of Long Beach, will serve as the guest speaker. For more graduation information, call the Office of the Registrar at (601) 318-6195.

► Christian comedian Dennis Swanberg will entertain at **Mississippi College's** parents convocation Aug. 24, 2 p.m., at First Church, Clinton. All are welcome. Free.

Revivals & Homecomings

► **Bunker Hill Church, Columbia:** Revival, Aug. 18 - 21; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 6:30 p.m.; Ron Jordan and Bo Parker, leaders.

► **Auburn Church, Tupelo:** 125th anniversary, Aug. 18; worship and Sunday School, 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.; lunch on the grounds and afternoon singing.

► **First Church, Laurel:** Revival, Aug. 18 - 19; Sun., 8:30, 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon., noon (complimentary lunch) and 6 p.m.; Dennis Swanberg, speaker; Joe Estes, music; Randy Turner, pastor.

► **Cleary Church, Florence:** 50th homecoming, Aug. 17 - 18; Sat., 4 - 6 p.m., fellowship and meal with Redemption Quartet, followed by speakers including former pastors Dale Holloway, Tim Williams, Gene Gillis, and Kevin Ivy; Sun., church-wide breakfast, 8:45 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.; Kevin Wade, speaker and pastor.

► **Falkner Church, Falkner:** revival and Bible conference, Aug. 18 - 21; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m., Brad Strand, speaker; Tues., 9 a.m. - noon

with lunch provided with Albert Wilkerson, David Perry, Ronnie Barefield and Brad Strand, speakers; Tues. - Wed., 6:30 p.m., David Perry, speaker; musical guests each night; Steve Cohea, pastor.

► **Concord Church, Booneville:** Revival, Aug. 18 - 22; Sun., 6 p.m.; Mon. - Thurs., 7 p.m.; Jerry Bishop, speaker; Robert E. Walker, pastor.

► **Short Creek Church, Iuka:** Revival Fest, homecoming, and revival, Aug. 17 - 21; Sat., 5 p.m., with worship, fellowship, and music by Dream Like Lazarus, Will Edgar, David Malone, and Erin Williams; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch, with Jerry File, speaker, and Van Foster, music; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; David Ingram, speaker; Debbie Ingram, music; Bill Hutto, pastor.

► **Sunrise Church, Leake:** Revival, Aug. 18, 11 a.m., followed by potluck lunch. Leftovers served 6 p.m., service at 7 p.m. - Wed., 7 p.m.; youth supper, Mon., 6 p.m. Anse Rigby and Sammy Brown, music; Wayne Hudson, speaker.



Sauls Valley Church, Monticello: July 14 - 17; shown are Phillip Alford, Paula Alford, Dot Ginn, and Bendon Ginn.

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LBJ JYS HEFMS PAFOB JYB YBPOBQL.

DLPERL BXHYJ: FQB

K = W

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Daniel 6:27

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

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SCHEDULE

Date	Time	Speaker
Aug. 18	10:15 a.m.	Rick Coram
Aug. 18	6:00 p.m.	Rick Coram
Aug. 18	7:00 p.m.	John Sullivan
Aug. 19	12:00 p.m.	John Sullivan
Aug. 19	6:30 p.m.	Ted Traylor
Aug. 20	12:00 p.m.	John Sullivan
Aug. 20	6:30 p.m.	Robert Smith

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SRI LANKA

cont. from p. 1

months ago, yet Perera recounts the story as if it happened yesterday. In a way, it did — he relives it with each visit to the courtroom where he must face those who violently closed his church.

Lawsuits filed by groups of pastors against the attackers claim that Sri Lanka's constitution calls for freedom of religion and that their churches should be allowed to meet. The high court agreed, ruling in their favor Aug. 2.

Despite the favorable ruling, everyone is holding their breath to see whether the violent attacks on churches by Buddhist extremists will stop. The targeted attacks are becoming more and more commonplace and extremists have vowed in local newspaper reports to shut down every church in the South.

Open Doors USA, which closely monitors the persecuted church, reports more than 30 churches have been attacked since Perera's.

Closing churches

The pastor explains that when his church was attacked, local authorities ordered them not to operate any longer because they had not been authorized by the state. While registration of religious organizations is not mandatory in this island nation, the government has been contemplating bringing all religious groups under regulation for over a year.

According to the 2011 census, more than 70% of Sri Lanka's population of 20.8 million is Buddhist. Christians number around seven percent. Catholics are at one percent and Protestant one percent, while Muslims make up a little less than 10 percent.

Sri Lanka is the world's oldest continually Buddhist nation, and extremists told a TIME reporter last month that they want it to stay that way. As a result, persecution is on the rise. Attacks on Muslims have hit the headlines, but the increasing incidence of Christian persecution has received very little attention.

"People are afraid to step foot in a church or any religious place," Perera says. "We cannot start new churches. Churches cannot rent or buy houses anymore."

The judge's ruling gave the churches in the court case permission to begin worship services again and register their buildings as official churches. Perera adds that the judge warned local authorities not to disturb their prayers again.

"Our constitution gives us freedom of religion, but in practice it is Buddhist and there will not be any other religion welcome," the pastor

warns. "This [persecution] is going to spread quickly from one district to another."

The veteran pastor is no stranger to persecution. The country suffered through two decades of civil war. Pastors had to walk the perimeter of their church building to check for landmines every Sunday morning. Before the 2004 tsunami hit the island, churches were burned, bombed, and shut down.

Things settled down and Sri Lanka disappeared off the World Watch List's top 50 persecuted countries. But now, it has started up again. Almost every week, a church or Muslim business is attacked in some way or another. Despite this persecution, Perera assures that the church closings and attacks have not hampered spreading the Gospel.

"God has been preparing us for this persecution all along. He knew!" Perera says, suppressing a chuckle of amazement. "He opened our minds to a new way of doing church last year. Before this even started happening, we were training lay leaders to lead house churches in their homes."

God prepares a church

Pastor Thilak Jayawickrama (not his real name) nods his head and excitedly jumps in to explain that the traditional way of doing house church in Sri Lanka was for organized churches to just rent a house and convert it into a church building.

These are the types of churches local authorities and extremists are shutting down, but with the discipleship and church planting method called Training for Trainers (T4T) they began using last year, church is really in someone's house, a business, or even outside under a shade tree.

"The thing about persecution is that even if it doesn't happen to you, you are still afraid. In your mind, you know that it could happen," says Jayawickrama, who is transitioning his congregation to house church. "With this new method, we don't have buildings. There is nothing to 'shut down.'"

Perera's church now meets in 16 different homes and is growing for the first time in years. Jayawickrama's church divided into eight. The groups are reproducing and starting new churches. Those who were once afraid to go to a religious place for fear of a mob or the monks asking questions are not concerned about going to a friend's home.

"When you ask people to go to your house, they come. It's your home. They are used to going there. It's comfortable and friendly. There's nothing threatening about a house,"

Perera says "and the result is that every week, people are coming and accepting Jesus."

So far, widespread persecution has not come from sharing the Gospel one-on-one. Christian worker Archer Hullett (not his real name) explains that the T4T model is based on sharing within a person's relationship network and their sphere of influence.

The worker admits that there might be some persecution from a new believer's family but nothing on the scale seen now against churches. Pastor Ruwan Ranatunga (not his real name) says since he switched to training lay leaders in evangelism and discipleship, the incidence of even this kind of familial persecution went down among those he mentors.

He credits it to the fact that as everyone becomes more active and involved in a house church, their faith grows and they become "doers of the Word" — applying biblical truths to their actions.

Ranatunga says the entire community sees the genuine changes as Christians live out the Gospel. Their friends and family become curious enough to not just ask questions but to listen instead of angrily objecting to Christianity.

Church growth

Hullett and the pastors say they have seen more come to Christ in the last two years than ever before. More than 60 new house churches have started with many more small groups on their way to functioning as a church from the Book of Acts.

That number doesn't even include traditional churches that broke up into the smaller T4T house church groupings because of persecution.

"The truth is that people here are hungry for the Lord," Hullett says. "It's a crucial time right now in Sri Lanka. The Gospel and churches could rapidly multiply or it could shut down completely. There are a lot of barriers right now."

All three pastors say there's no telling if the persecution of Sri Lanka's minority religions will subside or increase. The situation seems to change almost daily. Because of this uncertainty, Ranatunga asks for Christians around the world to pray for wisdom among the Sri Lankan Christian leaders.

"It is a time in our country when we need to adjust our traditional thinking of church and spread the Gospel in ways that do not draw widespread public attention," Ranatunga says. "We need to adjust without endangering the work of spreading the Gospel."

"Pray that we are able to follow the example set forth by churches in the Book of Acts."

ERITREA

cont. from p. 1

authorities are also threatening the students with long imprisonment and exclusion from university should they fail to renounce Christ."

After completing school, all Eritreans are required to participate in national service. The 39 students were selected from 17,000 students of the 26th national service intake who graduated July 13, according to Open Doors. Graduating students then continue to Senior Secondary School to complete grade 12.

Since 2002, worship outside the government-sanctioned Sunni Muslim, Eritrean Orthodox Church (EOC), Roman Catholic Church, and Evangelical Lutheran Church of Eritrea has been forbidden, with Protestant worship a criminal offense.

In 2005, authorities also began persecuting the EOC, particularly those in the church's renewal movement.

The government began a widespread crackdown on Christians outside the state-approved churches early this year, according to Open Doors, detaining them in harsh conditions. Christians make up 47% of Eritrea's population of 5.2 million, and Muslims 50%, according to Operation World.

The Marxist-leaning architect of repression of religion and free speech in Eritrea, President Isaias Afewerki, has been in power since Eritrea gained its independence from Ethiopia in 1991. The National Assembly elected him as president in 1993.

"In 2001, in the wake of a two-year border war with Ethiopia (1998-2000), Afewerki began cracking down hard on anything that could be viewed as a threat to national unity,"

Elizabeth Kendal wrote in the Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin last fall.

"He cancelled elections and closed all independent media. Opposition figures — politicians, activists, and journalists — were removed, mostly to underground 'secret prisons' for the 'disappeared,'" Kendal wrote.

An estimated 3,000 mostly Protestant Christians were incarcerated for their faith by the end of 2010. That number fell to about 1,500 as of November, according to Kendal, and Open Doors estimates the figure is now about 1,200.

The prisoners are held in shipping containers in desert camps, with some kept in underground cells, Kendal said.

"The conditions are inhumane. Children and the elderly are amongst the prisoners sharing skin diseases, dysentery, and other horrors in confined, unventilated spaces," Kendal reported. "Torture is routine... Several Christians have died in custody, and others have perished in the desert trying to escape."

The Eritrean military has reportedly made a business of Christian refugees, kidnapping them out of refugee camps in Sudan and selling them to traffickers in Egypt's Sinai. There they are sold to Bedouin gangs who ransom them for tens of thousands of dollars — electrocuting, raping, starving, and murdering the Christians as they threaten their relatives.

Editor's note: This story first appeared at Morning Star News (www.MorningStarNews.org), an independent news service focusing on the persecution of Christians worldwide. Edited for content and sentence structure.

MARRIAGE

cont. from p. 1

the criminalization of the Christian view of marriage as between one man and one woman. "It's only a matter of time before people of faith are targeted for punishment by government officials, and cease to enjoy the full rights of citizenship because they believe what their faith teaches them — that marriage can only be between one man and one woman."

"Based on what has already happened elsewhere, we predict that people of faith will face lawsuits, lose contracts, be denied employment, and be forced to stop providing goods and services. Charities will be forced to close."

NOM has pledged to spend up to \$600,000 to publicize politicians' voting records on same sex marriage in Minnesota and Rhode Island. "Virtually no politician in Minnesota or Rhode Island ran on a platform that openly pledged that he or she would redefine marriage if elected to office," Brown said. "Yet, when given the opportunity, they did so... When the inevitable consequences happen, we will make sure that voters know who is responsible for them. This issue is far from settled in either of these states."

Already, the Minnesota Human Rights Commission has issued guidelines making no exceptions for religious or conscience objections for individuals, according to NOM. Rhode Island's marriage law similarly allows no exceptions for individuals or small businesses, NOM reported.

Mississippi has a state

constitutional amendment that defines marriage as the union of one man and one woman, but recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings have

cast doubt on whether such constitutional amendments would hold up under federal court challenges by pro-homosexual activists.

Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

NEWBELL

cont. from p. 2

The Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board shares Christ and serves those in spiritual and physical need through avenues such as OneLife's One Woman and One Brothel projects. The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's website has an entire page devoted to resources on human trafficking.

Other organizations, such as International Justice Mission, Salvation Army, Sower of Seeds, Project Red Light Rescue, and Nefarious Documentary, provide numerous resources to help you get started.

Spread the word

Because of the horrific nature of sex trafficking, many of us do not want to face the

truth that this could happen right under our noses. One way to assist is to inform your churches and neighbors. Many articles are graphic in nature and therefore require discernment regarding which to share. There is, however, information available.

Through prayer, sharing, and education we can be active citizens in helping the fight against sex trafficking. We won't be able to solve the problem in one day, one year, or even five, but by the grace of God we can be the feet of Jesus to a world that is dying and for these young girls and boys who are enslaved in the most inhumane way.

Newbell is a wife and mother in Knoxville, Tn., who writes for the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville. Her website is trillianewbell.com. Learn more about sex trafficking at erlc.com/humantrafficking.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically

via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Jesus Commissions His Church • Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:6-8; 2:41-47

I remember with excitement the first time coach put me in the game. I played basketball in high school, but usually sat out the game on the bench. One evening, our team was routing the opponent so the coach thought it was safe to play the second stringers. My heart raced. I was nervous at first, but once I got into the flow of the action, I actually enjoyed playing. I even scored seven points. What a thrill.

Jesus commanded the church to get into a different kind of game, the game of making disciples of all nations. We can do that with the Holy Spirit's empowering and a connection to one another. This lesson helps us move from spectator to participant in what God is doing in the world through His church.

Understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:44-49)

I cherish Luke 24, especially 24:45. "Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (HCSB). Having affirmed His own mission as a fulfillment of "the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms" (24:44), Jesus introduced two clear aspects of God's Story as it related to people. First, "The Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead the third day" (24:46). This aspect of God's Story had been accomplished. Jesus suffered, died, and was raised back to life.

The second aspect of God's Story called for Jesus' followers to proclaim "repentance and forgiveness of sins"

in His name to all nations (24:47). The verb rendered "proclaimed" (HCSB; "preached" in KJV, NIV) is the Greek *kerusso*, meaning "to announce publicly," and is not limited to sermons by pastors. All Christians are proclaimers! This aspect of God's Story is to occupy God's people until Jesus comes again.

Jesus brought the disciples' mission into sharp focus by saying, "You are witnesses of these things" (24:48). He then commanded them to remain

in Jerusalem until they were "empowered from on high" (24:49). This command utilizes a Greek verb meaning "to put on clothes," used metaphorically of clothing themselves with Holy Spirit power (*dunamis*).

Do we understand this passage as Jesus' followers today? Do we clothe ourselves with God's power, His Holy Spirit, and then make deliberate efforts to proclaim "repentance and forgiveness of sins" to our world?

Engage in Mission (Acts 1:6-8)

During the 40 days between His res-

urrection and ascension, Jesus taught His disciples about God's kingdom (Acts 1:3). His disciples however never broadened their scope beyond "restoring the kingdom to Israel" (1:6). So Jesus helped them see themselves as part of God's bigger story. First, He said knowing the "times or periods that the Father has set" was not their business (1:7). The phrase "times and periods" renders the Greek nouns for measured time (*chronos*) and condition of

time (*kairos*). Second, He brought the disciples' mission into sharp focus again by promising they would receive power

(*dunamis*) once the Holy Spirit came on them. They were Jesus' witnesses. Third, He broadened their scope to include Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth (1:8).

Connect to Grow (Acts 2:41-47)

Early believers were connected! They were connected to Jesus through His Spirit. They were also connected to each other. They shared the common experiences of having accepted

the Gospel message and being baptized (2:41). Baptism was the beginning of a new life.

This new life was marked by devotion. The phrase "devoted themselves" meant "to attach themselves to something persistently." Luke then identified four key areas of life to which they devoted themselves (2:42). They were devoted to "the apostles' teaching." The Spirit empowered Jesus' apostles to instruct the people in His way. They also devoted themselves to "the fellowship" (*koinonia*), which includes togetherness, sharing, and like-mindedness. "Breaking of bread" was a third area of devotion. Some scholars understand "breaking the bread" in a narrow sense of "taking communion;" others apply the practice to eating meals together. The fourth area of devotion was prayer.

As a result of their shared experiences, the early church exhibited fear (reverence). They witnessed the apostles performing wonders and signs just as Jesus had done (2:43). They cared for each other, giving of themselves to meet others' needs (2:44-45). Their lives were characterized by worship, table fellowship, joy, humility, and praise (2:46-47). No wonder "every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved!" Isn't it time for us to get off the bench and into the game?

VanHorn is Dean of the Mississippi College School of Christian Studies and the Arts.



Bible Studies for Life

with W. Wayne VanHorn

Is There Any Hope? • Ecclesiastes 9: 3-12, 15-18

As summer draws to a close, it is natural to think of beginning a new school year on the many different levels of education—even for Bible study and Christian education in our churches. In order to make wise decisions in preparation for these new opportunities, we evaluate the last period of time for which we were responsible for developing a plan and putting that plan into action. We look for successful experiences and for things that indicate a need for change.

In the New International Version of the Bible, Ecclesiastes 9 begins with more of the Philosopher's commentary on the "meaninglessness" of life. "So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands... We cannot know the future, but it is reassuring to know that God is in control of all that happens, and it is He who cares for us. This philosophy holds that evil is in everything that happens under the sun. 'All share the same destiny—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean. Anyone who is among the living has hope—even a live dog is better off than a dead lion.' He continues by saying that the living know they will die, but the dead know nothing and are forgotten.

Having concluded that being alive is better than being dead, the Philosopher admonishes enjoying daily activities and work because it is here that God favors what you do. Wear white garments and oil which are symbols of festivity and joy. Enjoy life with your loving wife to make this disappointing and meaningless existence livable. Having no understanding of a future life in God's presence even though it appears in a few places in the Old Testament, his knowledge of an "afterlife" was based on the belief of a peaceful, but pleasureless existence in the underworld, which also included the teaching that one had a duty of full enjoyment of all one had while life lasted "under the sun—all your meaningless days."

A man's lot in life is his toilsome labor under the sun; therefore, whatever your work is, do it to the best of your ability—with all your might—for in the grave, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

A small city under siege by a powerful king was saved by a poor, but wise man, whom no one remembered. Such wise, and godly counsel from the heart is not popular, is rarely heeded, and soon forgotten. The Philosopher gleaned from this that "Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much." He considers little difference between fools and sinners.

Ecclesiastes does not recommend that one forsake righteousness and

sin as others are doing, but that one has a realization of what death would mean as far as one's plans and achieve-

ments are concerned. Sometimes bad wins over good, but is no reason for despairing or joining the enemy.

The "fly in the costly perfume" is not as simple as it seems. Left there long enough, the whole container will be permeated with the pungent odor of this small fly. This may refer to a life of folly which could put a shadow over or destroy a person's reputation.

The reference to "the right" represents that which is worthy of our effort and pursuit; as the wise man would choose to go to the right, while the foolish would choose the opposite, or left. The wise and foolish are characterized by their speech. The wise man's speech is intelligible and charming, while that of the foolish man destroys him because of its profuse abundance.

Even as he walks along the road, he cannot follow road signs. He has a way of complicating something simple. What is an easy task for a wise person is an exhausting undertaking for someone who does not plan and prepare in advance to succeed.

A country ruled by an inexperienced man who spends all of his time enjoying his position frivolously feasting in the morning and reveling in his power is unfortunate. God does not approve of a lazy man leaving his rafters to sag and house to leak.

One last admonition—do not think evil thoughts about the rulers or curse the rich privately because a "little bird" may carry your words and report what you say, thus "A little birdie told me..." (Ecclesiastes 10:20)

Duncan is a member of First Church, Starkville.

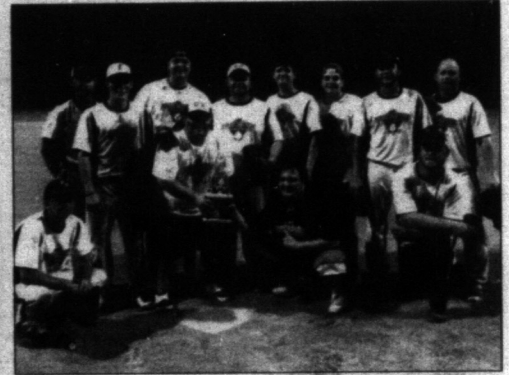


Explore the Bible

with Marion D. Duncan



Just for the Record



The **MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST** men's state softball tournament was held Aug. 2 - 3 at the Pearl City Center Complex. Large Church Division: **FIRST CHURCH, WATER VALLEY** - first place; **PARKWAY CHURCH, CLINTON** - second place; and **FIRST CHURCH, NATCHEZ** - third place. Small Church Division: **PINE FOREST CHURCH, COLLINSVILLE** - first place; **MT. ZION CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN** - second place; and **TUSCUMBIA CHURCH, CORINTH** - third place.



Children from **SEBASTOPOL CHURCH, SEBASTOPOL**, recently attended CentriKid Cap at Millsaps College July 22 - 26.

Thirteen children from **FIRST CHURCH, COLLINSVILLE**, attended Kids Camp at Timber Creek Camp, Pulaski.

Katelynn Blackwell and Paris Brumfield, **SILVER CREEK CHURCH, PIKE COUNTY**, recently spent a week at GA camp at Garaywa Camp and Conference Center.



Twelve girls and three youth from **FIRST CHURCH, POTTS CAMP**, attended GA/Acteens Camp at Garaywa Camp and Conference Center.

The Brotherhood of **MT. MANNA CHURCH, COLDWATER**, recently presented the RAs their new vests.

The WMU of **SILVER CREEK CHURCH, PIKE COUNTY**, helped collect a car full of food for the Pike Association food pantry.